

RIVERSIDE VILLAGE MEETING NOTES - APRIL 16, 2009



On April 16, 2009 the City of Auburn Mayor and City staff met with neighbors from the Riverside Village Apartments at 1608 8th Street NE, to discuss neighborhood concerns.

Staff in Attendance: MAYOR PETE LEWIS, COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER DUANNA RICHARDS, COMMUNITY SERVICES PROJECT ASSISTANT KIRSTEN REYNOLDS, DEPUTY POLICE CHIEF BOB LEE, TRANSPORTATION PLANNER CHRIS HANKINS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS CERT COORDINATOR REBECCA ADAMS

Community Members in Attendance: RAY KEASEY, JAMES HOLTS, JERAMIE RICHARDSON, ED AND VAHLIA TAYLOR, CARL CONN, MICHELLE MERTELL, TRACIE WASHINGTON, JAMES DATES, MICHAEL ACKLES, CHRIS JOHNSON AND TAPEKA TUCKER

Welcome and Introductions

Community Services Manager Duanna Richards welcomed everyone, thanked them for attending and asked City staff to introduce themselves. Mayor Pete Lewis then indicated the primary purpose of the meeting was for the City to listen to the residents' concerns, respond to questions they could answer immediately and identify items for follow up. The City takes notes of the meeting, which are then sent out to the attendees.

Mayor Lewis facilitated the meeting and discussed the following topics:

- ***Mayor's Update*** -- residents were encouraged to sign up for the Mayor's Update, an e-newsletter Mayor Lewis sends out every Friday about what's taken place in the City during the week, upcoming events, etc. He also uses the listserv to send out alerts about road closures, emergencies, etc. as a way to keep the community informed. Since this is a listserv, if you decide you don't want to continue receiving it you can unsubscribe at any time.

Public Safety Related Questions/Comments

- ***How should residents deal with criminal activity happening around the neighborhood?***
Residents were encouraged to report everything to 9-1-1. The citizens of Auburn own the 9-1-1 system. You should call 9-1-1 whenever you have an emergency, feel something suspicious is going on, need to speak with an officer or file a report (online reporting is also available www.auburnwa.gov/Emergency/Police/Citizen_Online_Police_Reporting.asp if you would prefer to file your report that way). **PLEASE NOTE:** If calling from a cell phone you need to ask for an "Auburn Call Receiver."

Auburn shares ownership of the 9-1-1 system with other South King County cities and the calls go to a dispatch center so residents shouldn't worry about tying up the phone line when making non-emergency calls. When you call 9-1-1 it will be answered by a "Call Receiver." The Call Receiver will determine whether or not your call is an emergency to be handled right away or to have an officer make contact with you to file a non-emergency report. They will ask questions which are specifically designed to obtain information so that the proper response can be made for your call.

If you want to know what the officer finds out be sure to let the Call Receiver know you DO want to be contacted by the officer when they've completed their investigation.

In addition to emergency issues, residents should also call 9-1-1 for non-emergency issues such as street lights out, stop lights out, missing stop signs, fireworks, loose dogs, sewer

backups, water leaks, etc. An alternative is to report issues via the City website. The link is under Online Services at the top of the page and is called Online Citizen Report (half way down): www.auburnwa.gov/Business/public_works/Online_Citizen_Report.asp.

- ***Auburn Police Coverage***

Auburn has 102 commissioned Police officers, 58 of which are assigned to patrol the city's six Police sectors. There are at least six officers and a Police Sergeant on patrol at any given time covering 212 miles of roads, serving 67,000 people in two counties that are divided by two rivers. Officers are assigned to an area for two years so they get to know the area and become proactive in solving problems. Police calls are prioritized with threat to life or property.

- ***Does Auburn have police volunteers?***

Auburn has one of the largest police volunteer groups in the State of WA. The Citizens Academy is a free, 11-week comprehensive program designed to introduce the public to the Auburn Police Department. The program includes patrol, investigations, narcotics, K-9 and a host of other police operations topics. This program will include a tour of the police dispatch center and the Police Academy. The Citizens Academy is open to any Auburn citizen 18 years or older. Applications are available at the Auburn Justice Center and at www.auburnwa.gov/Emergency/Police/How_to_Get_Involved.asp. Business office hours are: Monday-Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., closed Sundays and Holidays. Or you may call (253) 288-3147, leave your name and phone number, and someone from the Police Department will return your call and answer questions.

- ***What can residents do to be proactive in getting rid of the criminal activity?***

The neighborhood has had problems with drug activity and vandalism. Before the complex was much worse; with new management the complex has really been cleaned up. The apartment manager and owner talked about the importance of residents taking pride where they live by picking up trash; call manager to report children destroying something or, if you feel comfortable, talk to the parents about the activity.

Deputy Police Chief Bob Lee talked about Block Watch, it's built on the concept of neighbors watching out for each other because you know better than anyone else who belongs in your neighborhood and who doesn't. If you think "maybe I should call 9-1-1 about this," you should. Residents were encouraged to set up a Block Watch. Once the group is formed, Community Programs Officer Andy Gould will come out to do the formal training on what to watch for, how to react and how to get neighborhood participation. Groups are encouraged to get together several times a year to maintain an active group.

- ***How do you make yourself aware of sex offenders in the area?***

Deputy Police Chief Lee said that the Police Department is informed about sex offenders located in our community. He encouraged residents to go online to Family Watchdog at <http://www.familywatchdog.us/Search.asp> to get information about where registered sex offenders live and work. A resident talked about the different levels of sex offenders and gave advice on how people can educate themselves on how this system works.

- ***Are there gangs in Auburn?***

The police have seen gang affiliated graffiti for recruitment in the Lea Hill area and south end of Auburn. There are known gang members that live in Auburn but there have not been any gang rivalry issues. In comparison to other cities Auburn does not have a major gang problem. A Gang Task Force was developed to share information between law enforcement and the school district. The Task Force is working proactively together to stop potential gang activity before it gets out of hand.

Development Related Questions/Comments

- ***What is being done to alleviate parking in Downtown?***

Parking in Downtown is extremely limited because of construction projects and more commuters utilizing Sound Transit at the Auburn Station. Auburn has partnered with Metro, Pierce Transit and Sound Transit to offer shuttle service leaving from the Lakeland Hills area to help alleviate parking downtown. A shuttle for the Lea Hill area is likely to follow if the Lakeland Hills shuttle proves successful. Mayor Lewis will continue to meet with the transit entities to get more bus service in and around Auburn.

Mayor Lewis explained it has always been intended that Sound Transit build another 450-stall parking garage on the C Street side of the railroad tracks; with the passage of the Sound Transit's ballot measure last fall, it might actually happen sometime in the future. The 100 parking spaces for permit only were originally paid for by a majority of the downtown businesses when the garage was built. The City asked if some of them could be leased back to rent out to commuters and that's currently being done. The City also added some additional surface parking areas for commuters to use.

- ***What's happening in the Downtown area?***

Mayor Lewis talked about planned activity for six different blocks in Downtown. The City has assembled 26 parcels to promote development and is focusing on making Downtown an Urban Center that will promote retail on the ground level and residential space above. Walkways would connect Main Street shops to the new development. Auburn worked with 17 owners for the last five years to promote development of six different blocks in Downtown. One block is owned by Auburn Regional Medical Center, where they have built a cancer treatment center and a parking garage. The tavern was demolished to make way for a new professional annex building. The blocks located SE of City Hall are planned to be developed as mixed use.

Streets/Sewer/Traffic Related Questions/Comments

- ***The 8th and R Street intersection needs a traffic light***

Residents requested a traffic signal at 8th Street NE and R Street NE. The City has already approved to have this done, costing \$250,000 – 300,000 to set it up; however, the street directly across does not match up with R Street. ***UPDATED: The 8th and R Street signal is anticipated to begin construction in Spring 2010.***

- ***Can a crosswalk be painted on R Street for better access to Scootie Brown Park?***

Residents requested crosswalks be painted between Scootie Brown Park and R Street so it's safer crossing the street. There can't be a crosswalk with out a stop sign. Staff will evaluate having this done. ***UPDATED: The intersection requires ramp improvements in order to install an appropriate crosswalk that does not conflict with existing ramps and traffic. Project will be added to sidewalk project.***

Emergency Preparedness Presentation

- Emergency Preparedness CERT Coordinator Rebecca Adams gave a brief presentation regarding programs citizens can participate in to prepare their homes, families and neighborhoods in case of disaster. The Emergency Preparedness Division offers Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training; it is an eight week hands-on practice in such topics as first aid, triage and survival skills. Another program discussed was Map Your Neighborhood, which is now being combined with the Block Watch training. Neighbors are taught how to get organized before a disaster happens. Generalized disaster preparedness training is also available to interested community groups and organizations. To schedule any of these classes for your neighborhood, contact their office at (253) 876-1925 or e-mail

emergencyprep@auburnwa.gov; you can also visit their website to see a training schedule: <http://www.auburnwa.gov/disaster>.

- ***Emergency preparation on potential flooding***

The Army Corps of Engineers has notified the City of Auburn of a situation at the Howard Hanson Dam which may require the release of more water than usual during extreme rain events. As a result of this increased water release, parts of Auburn are at a higher risk of flooding. The general location of this higher risk is confined to the area of Auburn north of 22nd Street NE and those areas immediately bordering the Green River and Mill Creek. This situation may continue for the next 18 to 24 months or potentially longer depending on the nature of the repair work to be completed at the dam.

It is important to note the Army Corps assures us there is no risk of the dam failing. Renters, homeowners, and businesses are advised to review their insurance policies to ensure they are covered for flooding, sewer backup, landslides, sinkholes, and other issues commonly associated with significant rain events.

The good news is that due to preventive efforts by the Army Corps, King County and the four Green River Valley cities that would be affected by potential flooding, the chance of flooding at the Auburn gauge has been reduced from a 1 in 4 probability to 1 in 33. While it is not time to relax, it does give us a degree of hope that all of the hard work on the grout curtain and levees we've been doing will indeed make a difference.

The City is continuing our work to inform and protect. The sandbagging lots are open and training is being conducted for levee walkers to check the levees this winter. The City will continue to hold meetings and work with populations in need. Information will always be updated on the City's website, in the Mayor's Update, the City's Emergency Radio Station AM 1700, on TV21, the Auburn Alert (reverse 9-1-1) system and in the ***Auburn Reporter***. We do prepare for the worst and work for the best, and our pledge to you is that as soon as we have the information so will you. Sign up for Auburn Alert, our reverse 9-1-1 system, and email alerts; have a battery powered radio available so you can stay informed. Go to: <http://www.auburnwa.gov/emergency/disaster.asp>, click on Green River and Howard Hanson Dam Information.

Summary of Solutions Discussed/Action Items

1. Residents requested a traffic signal at 8th Street NE and R Street NE. The City has already approved to have this done, costing \$250,000 – 300,000 to set it up; however, the Street directly across does not match up with R Street. ***UPDATED: The 8th and R Street signal is anticipated to begin construction in spring 2010.***
2. Residents requested crosswalks be painted between Scootie Brown Park and R Street so it's safer crossing the street. There can't be a crosswalk with out a stop sign. Staff will evaluate having this done. ***UPDATED: The intersection requires ramp improvements in order to install an appropriate crosswalk that does not conflict with existing ramps and traffic. Project will be added to sidewalk project.***

Community Services Team Contact Information:

- Duanna Richards, Community Services Manager, (253) 931-3099, or drichards@auburnwa.gov
- Kirsten Reynolds, Community Services Project Assistant, (253) 876-1964, or kreynolds@auburnwa.gov